

CHAPTER 9

Exploring how quality children's literature can enhance compassion and empathy in the classroom context

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Abstract

Compassion and empathy are attributes that are critical for productive and supportive classrooms. They are also important qualities for the world outside of the classroom. An effective way of encouraging compassionate and empathetic thinking and actions with students in schools is through the use of quality picture books. Many children's books deal with deep emotional issues and through both the words and images evoke compassion and empathy. Such literature often emphasises how thinking about others has moral outcomes, enhances one's ability to communicate and collaborate with people, as well as develop deeper understanding of other's experiences and feelings. Further work can be enhanced by teachers undertaking specific teachable moments to instil effective personal and social capabilities within their students. The Australian Curriculum for example embodies seven general capabilities including Personal and Social Capability that includes: self-management, self-awareness, social management and social awareness. This chapter uses this capability as a framework to explore how these key ideas are reflected in three children's picture books. The chapter will analyse both the language and images used to illustrate how the authors have explored issues related to compassion and empathy such as depression, satisfaction, happiness and inclusion. In addition, the chapter will offer some ways in which teachers can implement effective learning activities with the books selected. This article will assist teachers in encouraging personal and social capabilities, with a particular focus on compassion and empathy, in order to address issues between students such as bullying, ignorance and misunderstanding of others.

Keywords: children's picture books, classrooms, compassion, empathy, personal and social capability, schools, self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, social management

Introduction

When teachers make space for children to chart parallels between their own emotional states and those of characters depicted in texts, they create opportunities for deeply transformative learning; the kind of learning where children can probe their evolving sense of self, and understand where more profound and complex emotions spring from (Garner & Parker, 2018; Holland, 1968; Katch, 2018; MacDonald & Baguley, 2012). Allowing students to explore emotions through, reading, writing, making and responding provides opportunity for meaningful emotional development and cultivation of wellbeing. Opportunities for teachers to work with students to explore the genesis and implications of emotional responses in their daily day lives is integral to their development of self and social awareness and management.

Empirical studies conducted over at least the past thirty years have shown emotions that are evoked by language can be powerful (Lindquist, MacCormack & Shablack, 2015; Velten, 1968), and can impact upon judgments and decision making (Johnson & Tversky, 1983; Lerner, Li, Valdesolo & Kassam, 2015). There has also been significant research exploring how images can depict emotion alongside language choice in texts such as picture books (Lewis, 2001; Unsworth, 2013). Despite this, Havas, Glenberg and Rinck (2007) suggest that “the interaction between emotion and language is not well understood” (p. 436). The opportunity to draw upon the plethora of individual daily experiences of students in order to explore emotional interactions within the visual and (sometimes) textual world of children’s picture books through a focussed approach can assist in developing effective life-skills (ACARA, n.d.)

This chapter situates itself within a broader conversation around the challenges and opportunities for learning about emotions and associated capabilities that children and their teachers can encounter within children’s literature. To do this, we utilise examples of children’s literature to explore the complexities of what it might mean to be a child growing up in Australia today. In doing so, this chapter shares a process of experiential inquiry, adopting the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) General Capability of *Personal and Social Capability* (ACARA, n.d.) as a guide to formulate strategies a teacher could use to discuss the complexities of human emotions such as compassion and empathy with their students.

With each of the authors drawing from their own encountered or observed experiences of working with children's picture books from Australian authors and illustrators we unfold how the ACARA General Capabilities of *Personal and Social Capability* (n.d.) might be adapted by teachers to inform a practical framework for teasing out complex thematic explorations pertaining to empathy and compassion. The general capabilities which also include Literacy, Numeracy, Information and Communication Technology, Critical and Creative Thinking, Ethical Understanding and Intercultural Understanding, play a significant role in the *Australian Curriculum* in equipping young Australians to live and work successfully in the twenty-first century (ACARA, n.d.). We propose that strategies that can support teaching and learning opportunities in complex and changing circumstances are essential in fostering personal and social capability.

A brief review of the literature

Children's Picture Books and Compassion and Empathy

The use of language, image and other modes in quality literary texts, such as children's picture books and animated films, can evoke powerful emotive visuals for readers/viewers. According to Harper (2016) "picture books can provide the framework for building empathy, tolerance, and friendships and reinforce social-emotional, problem-solving, and conflict resolution skills in young children" (p. 81). Building such skills in children is important as it can manifest feelings of wanting to help others without wishing anything in return (Almerico, 2014), that is, they learn to become compassionate and empathetic people.

Feelings such as compassion and empathy can also be enhanced through effective dialogic practice in the classroom. Harper (2016) noted that when teachers use quality pictures books as resources in the classroom they are able to "heighten their awareness of emotions, enhance their sensitivity to other's feelings, promote empathetic behaviours toward others, and foster moral development" (p. 81). Research from UNESCO (2006, p. 4) contends that introducing learners to artistic processes, such as those in picture books "cultivates in each individual a sense of creativity and initiative, a fertile imagination, emotional intelligence, and a moral 'compass', a capacity for critical reflection, a sense of autonomy, and freedom of thought and action. Costa (2001) suggested that engaging students in reading and thinking can support their learning about themselves and others including what we can

become. These approaches are increasingly vital in preparing 21st century learners and is in direct contrast to the Western celebration of competitive individualism.

The Individual and Society

For children to understand others is important in contemporary times. Over the last several decades, theoretical researchers (Barry et al., 2011; Hotchkiss, 2002) and social commentators (Lasch, 1979; Wolfe, 1976) have argued that a liberal, affluent, secular, and consumer-oriented North American culture has increasingly engendered narcissistic qualities of individualism and self-absorption (Thompson, 2015, p. 608). The self-esteem movement of the 1980s encouraged an approach to personal development in which self-esteem was considered the cure-all to a “plethora of social, academic, and mental health problems” (Barry et al., 2011, p. 146). In this approach to personal development, self-esteem and personal value “became equated not with doing good but simply with feeling good” (Hotchkiss, 2002, p. 177). Timms (2004, cited in Baguley & Fullarton, 2013, p. 29) highlights the impact of this more broadly by noting how “the special interests of the individual have triumphed over concern for general welfare”.

Baguley (2007) found that the myth of the triumphant individual has been deeply inculcated in Western thinking with recent movement towards collaborative and cooperative approaches in a range of sectors. Thompson (2015, p. 608) argued that there is an overblown preoccupation with self-fulfilment and self-realization by a generation who have attempted to alleviate the anxieties of an uncertain world. The importance of personal and social capabilities, such as evidenced in the *Australian Curriculum*, is seen as a foundation for both learning and citizenship as students are better able to manage their own emotions and behaviours, understand others, and seek to maintain positive relationships (ACARA, n.d.).

Curriculum considerations

Internationally, compassion and empathy are key attributes expected to be taught in educational contexts. UNESCO (2017) for example, reports that peace across the world needs to be initiated through tolerance and acceptance towards others. In this sense they believe that empathy is the “foundation of a better world” (UNESCO, 2017) and organised a photobook that highlighted the power of images and text in order to “pass on the values of solidarity,

empathy and altruism” to the reader (Bokova, 2017, p. 4).

(<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0025/002591/259191m.pdf>).

Similarly, in Australia, the *Australian Curriculum* features seven general capabilities of which *Personal and Social Capability* is one. This general capability understands how and why it is important for students in schools to learn about themselves and others, including their communities. ACARA (n.d.) states that:

Personal and social capability involves students in a range of practices including recognising and regulating emotions, developing empathy for others and understanding relationships, establishing and building positive relationships, making responsible decisions, working effectively in teams, handling challenging situations constructively and developing leadership skills. (p. 1)

This general capability acknowledges that there are four key ideas that support the development of personal and social capabilities. These are self-awareness, self-management, social management and social awareness.

Self-awareness

According to ACARA, *self-awareness* involves “students developing an awareness of their own emotional states, needs and perspectives” (n.d.). Through this process, students are able to explain and identify aspects that may impact on their own personal responses to incidents. In this way students are able to “develop a realistic sense of their personal abilities, qualities and strengths through knowing what they are feeling in the moment, and having a realistic assessment of their own abilities and a well-grounded sense of self-knowledge and self-confidence” (n.d.). In order to this, students are expected to be able to effectively reflect on and evaluate their learnings. This concept supports the:

- recognition of emotions
- recognition of personal qualities and achievements
- understanding of students as learners and
- development of reflective practice.

Self-management

Self-management develops students’ critical thinking capacities further by developing metacognitive skills. Students are able to effectively select and use appropriate skills to

manage themselves in different contexts. ACARA (n.d.) states “Students effectively regulate, manage and monitor their own emotional responses, and persist in completing tasks and overcoming obstacles.” They also develop organisational skills and identify the resources needed to achieve goals. Students need to be able to work independently but also work within teams. This involves being able to deal with failure. As such, self-management means that students can:

- express emotions appropriately
- develop self-discipline and set goals work independently and
- show initiative and become confident, resilient and adaptable. (n.d.)

Social awareness

Social awareness is important when working with others. According to ACARA (n.d.) this aspect includes knowing when and how to help other people. Students do this by acknowledging and identifying particular emotions. This particular aspect of the curriculum capability supports students’ skills in respecting others. Students “learn to participate in positive, safe and respectful relationships, defining and accepting individual and group roles and responsibilities” (p. 1). When students have high social awareness they are able to advocate for a just world and be critical citizens who can advocate for compassionate and empathetic understanding within the community. This involves students:

- appreciating diverse perspectives
- contributing to civil society and
- understanding relationships.

Social management

Social management is different to self-management as it is about working with others. This requires being able to communicate productively and work well in teams towards positive outcomes. The curriculum outlines that students should be able to develop the “ability to initiate and manage successful personal relationships, and participate in a range of social and communal activities” (p. 1). It involves knowing how to:

- communicate effectively
- work collaboratively
- make decisions

- negotiate and resolve conflict and
- develop leadership skills.

It is therefore important to consider how these attributes can be explicitly taught as well as fostered in the classroom.

Research design

In understanding how quality children's picture books deal with issues related to compassion and empathy we have drawn on the above-mentioned *Australian Curriculum's* General Capability: Personal and Social Capability (ACARA, n.d.) and three quality Australian picture books – *The Red Tree* (2001) by Shaun Tan, *The Short and Incredibly Happy Life of Riley* (2007) by Colin Thompson and Amy Lissiat and *Alfred's War* (2018) by Rachel Bin Sallah and Samantha Fry. All authors are award winning and often address social and cultural issues and emotions as themes within their texts.

We used the four elements of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and social management to identify aspects within the three picture books that relate to these areas. Further, we analysed both the use of language and image in the books to show how the authors expertly weave messages of compassion and empathy throughout their work. In analysing the images we used a social semiotic tool (Barton, 2018; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006) in the first instance to identify the representational, interpersonal and compositional meanings within the images and then we, as artists, explore the artistic-aesthetic elements of the work that address the themes identified. Elements including colour, shape, form, line, light, framing and camera angles were all explored in order to determine how the author/illustrators portrayed the themes present in each book. The next section shares the analysis of each book.

Research findings

Book-Case 1: *The Red Tree* by Shaun Tan

The Red Tree by Shaun Tan features a small red-haired girl who is facing significant challenges in her life, as depicted through her daily activities. The story begins with the

words *Sometimes the day begins with nothing to look forward to ... and things go from bad to worse*. Her bedroom fills with dead brown leaves that are overwhelming, making it difficult for her to enter the outside world. We can however, see one single red leaf framed on the wall.

Tan's use of colour and shape enhance the meaning of oppression in this image. The pile of dead brown leaves are overpowering, making it difficult for the little girl to leave her room. The blind is drawn and little light enters the room. The text and font size increases and is written in an uneven way indicating the uncertainty of entering the outside world.

The girl continues her day walking down the street. A huge menacing creature hovers over her and she hides in a bottle covered by an underwater mask—a metaphor for making it difficult to breathe. Tan displays an image of the girl with a tiny light bulb in her chest but the world remains big, unwieldy and uncaring—a *deaf machine without sense or reason*.

The girl experiences time going slowly and then returns home. As she enters the same room in which the book began daylight streams through the door. The little red leaf that appeared on each page throughout the book—a symbol of hope—has transformed into a luscious and bright red tree. It is the first time we see the girl look directly at the reader with a smile.

Throughout this text, the author beautifully illustrates the movement of the main character through a day and a “sequence of striking landscapes” (DNLR, 2016). While Tan uses a simple text to describe the happenings and feelings within the narrative, it is the images that represent the themes most deeply. The emotions of depression, despair and isolation feature through the use of colour, shape and symbolism.

The following table shows how the text may address each of the personal and social capabilities in the Australian Curriculum. Ideas for teachers' work in the classroom are also listed. These activities support the development of compassion and empathy in students.

TABLE 1: *The Red Tree's* analysis according to personal and social capabilities and meta-semiotic meanings

	Representational – characters and setting	Interpersonal – relationship between the viewers	Compositional - layout

Self-awareness	The girl's body language shows strong emotions such as sadness, despondency etc.	Children may recognise some of the feelings in the text. Teachers can support students in discussing different emotions and their strengths and express this via multiple modes.	The composition of the image and text creates a number of interpretative possibilities around depression and loneliness.
Self-management	Limited evidence through the text. Although the symbol of hope—the red leaf—indicates there are possibilities.	Although self-management does not feature heavily in the book teachers can encourage students to express their emotions appropriately.	Symbol of hope is present on each page. The colour red (leaf and girl's hair) indicates hope and empowerment.
Social awareness	The girl is depicted with an unhappy demeanour until the last page.	The reader is enticed to feel compassion for the little girl and show empathy through actions. The teacher could develop activities based on how students would support the girl in her emotions.	Throughout the text 'others' are illustrated as not caring or interested. The colour palette is brown and grey.
Social management	The characters in the book show no interest in supporting the girl.	Children may consider their friends who feel the same. Teachers can support children in understanding how to support and	As above.

		communicate effectively with others	
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Book-Case 2: *The Short and Incredibly Happy Life of Riley* by Colin Thompson and Amy Lissiat

The text narrative in *The Short and Incredibly Happy Life of Riley* by Thompson and Lissiat focuses upon the life of Riley the rat and the situational and environmental factors that shape, align and contrast with his sense of self-satisfaction and happiness. Entwined with this text narrative are two additional characters, a man and a woman, recurrent in the images around Riley's narrative that assert provocations and perplexities regarding human nature. The interplay between the literary narrative which speaks more explicitly from and to Riley's philosophy and attitude towards life and happiness creates juxtapositions for reflection. The arrangement of Riley's textual narrative and depicted visual narrative entwines to create the story of Riley the rat, who is presented as being satisfied with a simple life, where all of his basic needs for happiness are described and met. Running parallel to the storyline describing Riley's life of contentment, we see some provocative juxtapositions drawn between Riley and the Moustached man, searching for happiness.

The text opens with a picture of a baby, sitting with a balloon pinned to its nappy, accompanied by the text *Everyone wants to live forever*. This opening page and image of the baby with a vibrant yellow, buoyant balloon creates an immediate and obvious parallel point for the cover art, where we see Riley comforting a very small (literally in scale), emaciated and downtrodden looking Moustached man; one of the central visual protagonists depicted throughout the picture book. Later versions of the text cover page (2017 reprint) incorporated the *Children's Book Council of Australia–Picture Book of the Year* medal into a balloon, which is tied to the Moustached man's wrist.

The reader can see how the Moustached man on the front page holds a much less buoyant, dull and somewhat misshapen or deflated looking balloon. From the very beginning of the story, we are positioned to consider the depicted relationship between animal and human, need and want, contentment and desire, and how gratitude and appreciation for what one has, as opposed to what one has not, is imperative to cultivating a sense of self satisfaction and contentment.

In another vignette, we gain a sense of Riley's joy at finding the perfect stick to scratch a part of his back that he cannot quite reach: *All Riley wanted was a little stick with a pointy end to scratch the bit of his back he couldn't reach himself.*

This satisfied description (and depiction) of Riley's contentment is juxtaposed with a highly provocative image of the Moustached man, looking grey, sad and isolated from a semi-circle of men with their backs to him. The Moustached man, wearing a tiny peace symbol on his breeches, is pierced with sticks, with the text: *People, of course, should never be allowed to have sticks with pointy ends, because they stick them into each other.*

An interesting point for exploration here is why we should/should not feel pity for the Moustached man, particularly given some of the previous descriptions of the attitudes and behaviours of people as greedy, all consuming, competitive and cruel. This provocation can be explored with older children about the sweeping statements regarding people, and how we as an audience ascribe to a particular collective of humanity.

The following table shows how consideration of the General Capability - *Personal and Social Capability* can be used to identify and unpack opportunities to examine self and social awareness and management for teachers' working with *The Short and Incredibly Happy Life of Riley* in their classroom. These discussion points and ensuing strategies and activities present a pedagogical approach to help support the development of compassion and empathy in relation to examination of the key ideas captured in this picture book.

Table 2: *The Life of Riley's* analysis according to personal and social capabilities and meta-semiotic meanings

	Representational – characters and setting	Interpersonal – relationship between the viewers	Compositional - layout
Self awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Riley – aware of his needs in relation to his sense of happiness; Moustached man – Always appears to be in search of ways to satisfy his needs and achieve happiness; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children may recognise how some of the rich descriptions emphasise excess and greed, love and lust, desire and need Use of famous/recognisable imagery (i.e. Van Gogh, Raphael, Da Vinci, Munch) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Story opens with minimal, but powerful/evocative text, centre position for emphasis Text at times is overwhelming and

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blonde woman – appears always in relation to Moustached man, and similarly in search of love • The need to be loved appears to be inextricably linked to sense of self and happiness. 	<p>in relation to fame/desirability self worth/value.</p>	<p>saturating, alluding to rhetoric of superficial love/lust, need to consume/acquire as many things as possible (consumerism)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Text falls off the linear /slips to droop on page adding further emphasis emotive quality/weight of words.
Self management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers can use rich textual descriptions and accompanying imagery to facilitate conversations around the differences and how these can support the reflective self. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scope for discussion around role of pets in relation to emotional health and wellbeing • Provocation for discussion – the difference between an animal and a pet (Riley vs Moustached man’s dog). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interesting to explore the role of the Moustached man’s little dog, who appears to be with him at most times where the man is grappling with his sense of self-worth. The dog is always looking expectantly at the man, tail wagging (suggested through use of line).
Social awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Riley consistently presents us with a 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through Riley, we are positioned to reflect upon 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colours and shade/tone are

	<p>sense of satisfaction, contentment and happiness – depicted through facial expression and bodily gesture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moustached man depicts a range of emotions through the above, most of which are doubtful, depressed, insecure, perhaps misplaced contentment. 	<p>how being satisfied with less and simplicity supports self-happiness and satisfaction.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through Moustached man and Blonde woman, we are positioned to reflect upon the complexities of human nature, where consumerism, greed, fear and lust disrupt and distort our capacity to be satisfied with simplicity and less. 	<p>used pointedly and powerfully to allude to emotive weight – warm colours for exertion, cool colours for sadness, darkness for loneliness.</p>
Social management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The three key characters unfold across the story separate to each other, yet speaking powerfully to complex human emotions, and how to inhibit/enable happiness • Being appreciative/expressing appreciation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The provocative nature of imagery in relation to text alludes to powerful potential outcomes/implications of greed, fear, lust, acceptance • Topics such as war, betrayal, deception, loss, searching and settling create rich opportunities for reflection/discussion/debate • Scope to reflectively examine own views/perceptions/parameters of/for happiness. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visual information can be examined in relation to key characters, and how material things create a particular dynamic between characters and text narrative – transferable from the text to our own lives.

Book-Case 3: *Alfred's War* by Rachel Bin Sallah and Samantha Fry

At the centenary of the First World War, a plethora of children's picture books dealing with various aspects of the conflict were published. By 2017, such publications become a "torrent" (Lawn, 2015). (For a selection, see Bogle & Whatley (2015), Everett &

McGuire (2007), Hannaford & Hannaford (2015), Hoy & Johnson (2006), Jorgensen & Harrison-Lever (2004), Kerby, Tuppurainen-Mason, & Baguley (2017), Metzenthien & Camilleri (2015), and Walters & Mullins (2008)). Each is pervaded, to a greater or lesser extent, by the “increasingly sentimentalised construct of the Australian soldier as a victim of trauma and the traditional use of Australian war literature to explore national identity” (Kerby, Baguley, Lowien, & Ayre, 2018).

Rachel Bin Salleh and Samantha Fry’s *Alfred’s War* (2018) gently exposes the historical absence of Indigenous servicemen or women from the nation’s history contextualised with the broader story of Indigenous Australians.¹ They do this by drawing on familiar tropes, ones that pervade the Australian imagining of conflict, thereby seeking an integration of the Indigenous experience rather than the creation of a separate mythological tradition. By seeking to engender compassion rather than outrage, to seek admission to the mythology rather than redress for decades of ostracism, *Alfred’s War* fits seamlessly into the Australian literature of war.

Bin Salleh calls on familiar tropes in her portrayal of the main character Albert, *always with his hat on, his billy tied to his swag and holes in the soles of his shoes*, as he walks *from town to town looking for work*. It is a powerful image not because it disrupts our national mythology but because it extends it to include an otherwise marginalised character. Albert is not a threatening ‘other’. He is appealing, unthreatening and his later suffering stirs our compassion because we see ourselves in his journey, and perhaps our complicity.

There is no send off for Albert, who merely writes to his family that he *has signed up for adventure and travel*. This is perhaps the most significant sentence in the book for it is an overt effort to separate Alfred from the actual prosecution of the war, for that would emphasise his agency at the expense of his victimhood. As Bin Salleh and Fry may have sensed, any attempt to communicate Indigenous trauma within the parameters of Australian military history is inevitably problematic. Though understandable, any attempt to link the Indigenous struggle against European settlement and military service after 1901 is, in Padraic Gibson’s (2014) view, “fundamentally mistaken. There is a real danger of the proud tradition

¹ Though officially barred from service, approximately 1200 indigenous Australians enlisted during the First World War by hiding their Aboriginality, taking advantage of regional disparities in process, or by taking advantage of the decision to allow enlistment to those with one white parent or who had assimilated sufficiently. Contemporary press reports of Indigenous service were used as a means of shaming white men into enlisting. The reference to Albert mourning for his lost mates reflects the fact that an Indigenous soldier tended to meet with racism at the entry and exit points of his military service rather than in the field.

of Aboriginal resistance to British invasion being used to bolster the militaristic, nationalist ideology being carefully cultivated through the ANZAC centenary” (p. 2).

Trauma rather than glory becomes the central motif in this text. Albert also does not return unscathed, but his “gammy leg” is merely a visible scar, for his greatest wounds are psychological: *Every so often, Alfred could hear the never-ending gunfire in his head and the whispers of young men praying. On those days, he curled into a ball and slept in the shadows.*

The illustrator portrays this through the use of swirling images around Alfred’s head as he sleeps which contain horses and men he knew juxtaposed against grey clouds of smoke and memory. There is a sense that perhaps he feels closest to his friends sleeping on the ground and under the stars. Albert’s struggles occur before and after the war, not during and this is an important distinction. For there is no mention of an enemy, nor even where the battles that so traumatised him were fought. It is the ostracism of Alfred in peacetime Australia that is offered as the ‘real’ trauma. When suffering from flashbacks he enters the world of shadows. When attending Anzac Day services Albert continues to dwell in those shadows, *until he heard the lament of the bugle, and then he quietly joined the people gathered in the morning light.*

Bin Salleh in fact has a far more reverential take on Anzac Day than a reader might initially have expected. She does not question the commemoration or its place in the national psyche, and in fact is quite restrained in her views and conservative in her literary choices. A reader might assume that Albert’s plight was a matter of oversight rather than reflecting deeply entrenched views about race. For though “Alfred had fought in the Great War ... his bravery was not a part of the nation’s remembering. He was one of the forgotten soldiers”. Even the historical postscript is un-emotive in its reference to the lack of recognition afforded Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander servicemen. The concluding observation that “it would take years” before they were “acknowledged and valued” communicates a reassuring message that Albert’s story is very much a matter for the historical record rather than a contemporary issue.

TABLE 3: *Alfred’s War’s* analysis according to personal and social capabilities and meta-semiotic meanings

	Representational – characters and setting	Interpersonal – relationship between the viewers	Compositional - layout
Self-awareness	With no citizenship rights in his own country Alfred is neither honoured as a returned soldier. The images depict Alfred pursuing a lonely life, often in natural settings such as the bush, until each Anzac Day when he quietly joins the Dawn Service.	Children may recognise the injustice of Alfred’s situation. They may also recognise some of the emotions Alfred experiences such as the excitement of going to war, the friendships he made during this time. A photograph depicts respect: ‘Me and my mates, Great War 1917’).	The book begins with a double page spread of Alfred fishing depicted in pencil and soft washes of watercolour. Very minimal text is used which is often centred. Nature is a predominant theme throughout with mainly a blue/green palette used. Alfred is isolated until the final sepia photograph – depicting him as equal.
Self-management	Alfred overcomes a range of obstacles to maintain his independence. He is plagued by the horrifying memories of war which become worse at night when he is sleeping alone.	Teachers can encourage students to consider why it is difficult for Alfred to express his emotions. They can also consider loss and discuss any family histories that may include servicemen and women. Students	The book begins with Alfred alone and ends with him in a photograph with his mates. He is proud and happy with a sense of comradeship. The images throughout have a dream-like

		could also discuss the cover image.	quality of remembrance.
Social awareness	Alfred is depicted alone throughout most of the book. He is aware there are places Aboriginal people are not allowed to be in and in group situations he appears on the periphery.	<p>The reader is positioned as an observer of Alfred a WW1 ex-serviceman as he wanders the country, remembering his fallen comrades and trying to ignore the pain of his war time injuries.</p> <p>Teachers can make students aware of the Australian Government's failure to recognise Indigenous servicemen and women when they returned from active service. They can also assist students in understanding the importance of Acknowledgement of Country.</p>	<p>Alfred's face is not fully visible until several pages into the text, perhaps suggesting his erasure from this aspect of history.</p> <p>Two pages of historical facts at the end of the book about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander veterans provides important information to assist students in understanding this important aspect of Australian history.</p>
Social management	Alfred is portrayed as respectful and humble throughout the book however, he is not treated	The imagery is gentle and inviting. The text is minimal and complements the character of Alfred.	The image of Alfred with his swag and billy is similar to the typical Australian bushman. The same

	equally on his return and is described as a 'forgotten soldier'.	Loneliness is a pervasive theme throughout the book as is duty and respect.	type of swag he used as a soldier appears with him as an older man as a unifying device.
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Discussion and strategies for classroom practice

It is evident that each of these books can be used as powerful resources to teach children about issues related to compassion and empathy. Each author beautifully and effectively portrays their characters in ways that evoke the reader's concepts of emotion and relationships albeit in different contexts, times and spaces.

Tan's work highlights the need for social awareness of mental health issues such as depression and feelings of isolation. Through the use of complexly illustrated pages that feature a symbol of hope, a red leaf, Tan effectively portrays the character's sensation of oppression and hopelessness. The reader is drawn into these sensitivities and it is apparent that one becomes sympathetic to the red headed girl's plight. The final depiction of a lush, bright and hopeful Red Tree provides a slight sense of optimism, despite the possibility that the girl may continue to face her challenges.

In *The Short and Incredibly Happy Life of Riley*, Thompson and Lissiat represent basic happiness. Without striving to outdo other people and to appreciate what we have the book highlights the secret to happiness. Riley is always happy because he does not compare himself to other people. He is content with what life has provided him and the cycle of life which he embarks on in a much shorter timeframe than that of most humans provides an important message that the reader is able to relate to.

Alfred's War by Bin Sallah and Fry explores the concept of trauma experienced by returned Indigenous servicemen and women, including not being recognised upon their return. This is displayed powerfully through the use of colour, framing, angle and language. The softly rendered illustrations complement the character of Alfred who moves softly through the landscape with minimal interaction. His positioning as a non-citizen on his return from the war is juxtaposed with the way he was accepted as an equal in the army as detailed in the notes at the end of the book. Alfred displays qualities of courage, service, dignity and

respect even though he returns wounded and without the recognition of the service he gave to his country.

Each of our selected picture books have displayed how curriculum intentions, such as those in the *Australian Curriculum's* Personal and Social Capabilities, can be present within the language and images in the texts. With appropriate knowledge and skills teachers can use the texts as powerful stimuli to support the growth of children's and young people's compassion and empathy. The following section shares some strategies teachers can use to effectively use these picture books.

Strategies for use of quality picture books to develop compassion and empathy

1. Know the resources

It is important that teachers spend some time selecting appropriate picture books to use with their students. Not all books will be able to support learning around compassion and empathy so time needs to be well spent selecting a book and also developing learning activities around elements of that book (as we have shown in our Book Case studies). Teachers can clearly link teaching and learning about compassion and empathy to curriculum and educational policy.

2. Know the students

Each classroom is different and students may have had deep seated experiences related to negative emotions such as those displayed in our texts (e.g. depression, trauma, feelings of isolation, inequality, social disadvantage etc.). Teachers should carefully work with students in supporting their own personal and social development. Using quality picture books can assist in multiple ways including supporting students who need it, creating safe classrooms for all students and enhancing students' own capabilities individually, socially and culturally.

3. Carefully create learning activities

Using quality picture books to support social and personal proficiencies requires careful thought. Cam (2012) suggests teachers firstly identify an ethical issue for teaching and learning purposes. This could include one of the following: personal and social awareness or management. Next teachers should set an agenda for the students. This can be done in creative ways such as providing an arts-based learning experience initially and then discussing this experience using appropriate meta-language based on the capabilities. The teacher can then suggest other ideas and opinions, inviting students to reason why particular

situations are explored in the books. Further, students can evaluate the use of language and image in the texts and reach reliable conclusions, solutions or resolutions (Cam, 2012, p. 72).

4. Continue professional learning

Schools and classrooms are constantly changing so it is critical that teachers keep up to date with skills related to teaching the concepts of compassion and empathy on one hand and how these may be illustrated in a range of teaching resources such as picture books, as well as compassionate and empathetic understanding of students towards toward others. Much research in the field of language and literacy for example, posits the importance of students viewing texts, whether print only or multimodal, critically so as to uncover socio-political and socio-cultural underpinnings (Kalantzis, Cope, Chan & Dalley-Trim, 2017).

Conclusion

Children's picture books offer an ideal opportunity to engage students in learning about emotions and how to regulate them. The three books discussed in this chapter encourage students to individually interact with both images and text to explore and share the emotions of the characters. Compassion and empathy which are the focus of this chapter occur when students can identify with another person and the challenges they are understanding. Moving the perspective away from themselves to consider the impact of particular situations on other people, such as evidenced in *Alfred's War* can promote the development of compassion and empathy through understanding.

The three book case studies provide examples for teachers to encourage students' personal and social capabilities of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and social management by exploring how the characters and settings, the interpersonal relationships between the characters and the reader and the design elements and principles have been used by the author and illustrator to further enhance meaning. The multi-modality of children's picture books also offer an engaging way for students to explore complex emotions by moving between text and image which can also have multiple interpretations depending on a student's gender, cultural background and visual and textual reading ability. Students are being increasingly exposed to violence and intolerance through increased access to technology. Therefore, enhancing the qualities of compassion and empathy in the

classroom through devices such as children's picture books is an important opportunity to provide them with the skills and abilities to respond in ways that are critical for their future.

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